

Acts 13

A GROWING MOVEMENT

Holy Spirit and Gospel Powered Mission

Life Group Leaders should read through this material and choose a few questions to talk over in your group. Your group will not have time to cover all the material. The guide is for personal study and for choosing a few questions that you and your life group would like to discuss.

Read Aloud Acts 13:1-3

Before we break down this section of Scripture, describe what is happening in your own words. (Being able to summarize Scripture is a great way to see if we are comprehending what we have just read.)

Acts 13:1

The early Church was filled with gifted leaders. There was not just one prominent man who led the Church, rather there was “shepherding teams” that led and equipped the Church. As the Church becomes more established in part 2 of our series of Acts we will find that establishing local elders with various gifts was a key component to the churches success.

A Teachers - These were men who were able to methodically and clearly explain the truth of Scripture. Teachers are focused on education so that the saint can thoroughly understand the essential truths of the Gospel. Teachers may also have the ability to help others study and understand the Scripture for themselves.

B Prophets - These were men who were gifted in the preaching or proclaiming of the Word of God. Preaching is focused on exhorting, encouraging, and convicting the saints. Teaching can accomplish these tasks as well, but preaching is more focused on the action steps and the “why” behind obedience, rather than understanding the depth of the content.

We also see in the book of Acts prophets who had insight into discernment and or the future.

C All the gifts given to the leadership of the church is for the purpose of equipping the saints. Read Ephesians 4:11-16 for more information.

? **Question: Do you find yourself appreciating the differing gifts amongst leaders? Or do you find yourself being critical of leaders whose gifts do not seem to meet your needs effectively?**

Acts 13:2-3

1 The early Church was devoted to the right things. Here in Acts 13 we see that the leadership was devoted to worship, the teaching/proclaiming of the Word, and fasting. They were hungry and spiritually reliant on God to move.

A Worshiping the Lord - This is a phrase that was used for the priests in the Old Testament. Some versions translate this word “ministering.” The Greek word is **leitourgōō**. It means to be a public servant, or to perform religious or charitable functions. This can provide a pretty good template of what God means by worship. Worship is more than singing. In the Old Testament to minister to or worship the Lord in a way that pleased Him consisted of a humble heart, fearing and obeying God’s Word, taking care of the poor and afflicted, etc. We do not know exactly what these men were doing, but they were focused on what pleased the Lord.

B Fasted - Fasting is an element of worship that we tend to leave out in the western church. However, when talking about fasting in Matthew 6, Jesus did not say, “if you fast,” but rather, “when you fast.” This does not have to be a food fast, although it can be. Fasting can refer to sacrificially forgoing any pleasure for the sake of relying on God and worshipping Him. Matthew 6:16-18

? **Question: What has been your experience with fasting?**

2 **Sending out of Paul and Barnabas** - Paul and Barnabas were the first official “missionaries” sent out by the local church. Paul and Barnabas did not send themselves, but ultimately were sent by God.

A A Desire They Had: The first step to following God’s call is to have Him awaken a conviction and passion in your own heart. These men had a heart and passion to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They were willing to go and were available to go.

1 Timothy 3:1 states this is the first step in the process of being qualified to be an elder/pastor of a local church.

B Leaders Affirmed Their Call: It is not enough to just “feel called.” Rather God provides confirmation of our calling from godly leaders. In this case, the leaders of the church at Antioch saw the calling that God had on Barnabas and Saul’s lives. They saw not only the gift and calling for ministry but also saw that they had the godly character to fulfill a calling from God. Qualifications for elders/missionaries is found in 1 Timothy chapter 3, Titus 1, 1 Peter 5, and Hebrews 13.

1 Timothy 1:18-20 & 1 Timothy 4:12-16 explain the importance of “calling” in the life of a pastor/elder/missionary. When times were hard for Timothy, Paul reminded him of his calling from God and the affirmation of that calling from himself and the other elders.

C The Holy Spirit Called Them: Finally, it is not enough to feel called and have affirmation from men, but ultimately we must be convinced that God Himself is calling us. The Holy Spirit is the one who stated to Paul, Barnabas, and the leaders that they were in fact called to be missionaries/apostles to the Gentiles. Acts 20:28 clarifies that God is the one who appointed the elders at Ephesus through the Holy Spirit. Acts 20:28

D Sent Out: The church officially and publicly sent out Barnabas and Saul for the work of ministry. This church prayed for Saul and Barnabas and acted as a support system and an agent of accountability for them alongside the church at Jerusalem.

Read Aloud Acts 13:4-12

Describe what is happening in your own words.

Acts 13:4-5

Paul and Barnabas were the leading Apostles of this growing mission, but they did bring with them John as an assistant. The early Church was always focused on working as a team and raising up future leaders.

Together, they first preached the Gospel in the synagogues, a recurring practice mentioned in the ministry of Paul. Paul had a heart for the Jewish people as his kinsmen and as the people of God. The Jews were also extremely valuable in the establishment of the Church. Many of the Gentiles had little to no background in the Scriptures, whereas the Jews knew the Scriptures very well. As the Jews were saved, they instantly had a good foundation in the Old Testament Scriptures to apply those teachings through the lens of the Gospel.

Acts 13:6-12

God opened the door for Paul and Barnabas to speak with a very influential man, Sergius Paulus. This man was the “deputy of the county,” a governor of sorts to the Roman empire. Sergius Paulus had with him a man who was resistant to the Gospel, and one of the first “spiritual showdowns” in the mission for the Gentiles began.

A Bar-Jesus or Eymas was a sorcerer. Most likely he was a man who studied and worshiped the stars for guidance. This was a type of divination that early cults practiced that was a means to consult demons.

B Paul confronted this demonic leader with the power of God by striking him blind. Throughout the Scriptures God has struck his enemies with sickness, plague, and even death. This power of God led to the salvation of a prominent Roman official.

C Notice that it was not only the power of God that got the proconsul's attention but also it was the teaching of the Lord. The power of God in miraculous acts and testimonies can get the attention of unbelievers, but it cannot change their heart. It is the message of the Gospel by grace through faith that can change an individual's heart. Romans 1:16



Question: It can be easy to be intimidated by the forces of Satan. The truth is, fear is Satan's greatest weapon. How can you walk out your faith like Paul? To not be intimidated by the power of Satan, but rather boldly rely on the power of God?

Read Aloud Acts 13:13-52

Describe what is happening in your own words.

Acts 13:13-15

After experiencing great success in Salamis, Paul and Barnabas experienced something very difficult. They experienced one of their ministry partners giving up. John-Mark left the missionary duo for an unknown cause. However, in Acts 15 we find that John-Mark's failure to continue in the mission left such an impression on Paul that he was unwilling to trust or work with him for a period of time.



Question: Walking away from a mission from the Lord can be very damaging to ourselves, to those we are leading, and to those we are serving with. What steps are necessary when counting the cost of leadership and service to the Lord?

Acts 13:16-25

Paul preaches the Gospel to the Jews by giving them an account of the Old Testament Scriptures. He specifically references stories that are foreshadowing of salvation and the messianic promise of a King.

Matthew 2:1-6, Luke 2:6-12, Micah 5:1-4, Isaiah 9:1-7, Revelation 19:11-16

Acts 13:26-41

Paul continues his Gospel presentation by getting to the heart of the matter by addressing the following topics:



They did not recognize Him NOR understand the Scriptures

The Jews had been studying and waiting for the Messiah their whole life, yet when He was right in front of them they did not know Him. Why? Because they misunderstood the Scriptures. Lord open our eyes!



Prophecies of the Resurrection

Paul reinforces that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise to the Jewish fathers. From the beginning it was God's promise to bring hope through the resurrection of the Anointed One to an everlasting kingdom.



Salvation & Judgment

Finally, Paul makes it clear that Jesus is the only way to God. His life, death, and resurrection is the only means to the forgiveness of sins. Not only this, but that the rejection of the promised Messiah would lead to a judgment beyond what they could imagine as quotes Habakkuk 1:5.



Question: Is there an element of Paul's Gospel presentation that sticks out to you?

Acts 13:42-52

1

Initially the Jews were excited about the Apostles message. However their tune quickly changed as they saw that the Gentiles also received the message. Pride, jealousy, and bitterness choke out the work of the Gospel in our hearts and make us incapable of receiving and expressing God's love. Hebrews 12:14-15, James 3:13-18

2

Not only did the Jews reject the Word, but the Gentiles were joyful and hungry for the Word. Time revealed what sort of "soil" each person had in their heart. It is one thing to be excited about the Gospel, it is another thing to receive the Gospel with a humble heart. This is right in line with what Jesus taught in Mark 4:1-20 in the parable of the sower.

We also see the power of a humble heart in that despite the persecution and injustice the disciples remained joyful and were filled with the Holy Spirit.



Question: We cannot always know where someone's heart is at with God by their initial reaction to the Gospel. Why do you think many people like the idea of Jesus, yet are not able to endure like the parable of the sower teaches?



Weekly Challenge

Acts 13 covered a lot of topics and ground as Paul and Barnabas start their journey. Following Christ is not about riding the spiritual highs of life, but rather it is about having the faith, and sometimes grit, necessary to remain steadfast in trials and change. One component that helps us remain steadfast is a sense of calling. Take some time this week to write out what you believe God is asking you to do or the mission He has sent you on in this season of your life. Once you have this thought written down, share it with a trusted friend or accountability partner.

Memory Verse

Acts 14:21-23 ESV

²¹ When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. ²³ And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.